

How can adopting a trauma-informed approach help drive forward improved outcomes as part of Scotland's roadmap for COVID-19 recovery, renewal and transformation?

Learning Report: Adult Social Care

Responding to trauma is, now more than ever, a public health priority. The COVID-19 pandemic has, and will continue to, impact people receiving adult social care support, as well as the workforces that support them. Research shows that trauma can have an adverse impact on people's lives, increasing their risk of experiencing poorer physical and mental health and poorer social, educational and criminal justice outcomes than people who do not experience trauma. However, inequality of outcomes for people who have experienced trauma is not inevitable, with a growing evidence base suggesting that adopting a trauma-informed approach can help improve health, wellbeing and life chances for people affected by trauma.

Through the National Trauma Training Programme, the shared ambition of the Scottish Government, COSLA and partners is to develop a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive workforce across Scotland. The aim of this work is to ensure we deliver services in ways that prevent further harm or re-traumatisation for those who have experienced psychological trauma or adversity at any stage in their lives and support their unique recovery journey.

As part of the programme of support available to professionals working across local authorities and other community planning partners, the Improvement Service, in partnership with the Scottish Government and NHS Education for Scotland, hosted a series of deep dive learning events over 2020-21. Each event provided an opportunity to explore how adopting a trauma-informed approach can support key community planning priorities and support professionals to identify tangible steps to help ensure this approach is embedded in policy and practice moving forward.

The event on 25th March 2021 provided opportunities for participants to:

- Learn about the impact of trauma and what a trauma-informed approach looks like;
- Learn from existing good practice and how a trauma-informed approach can support workforce wellbeing and improve outcomes for people requiring support from adult social care services;
- Hear about existing resources and support for implementation of a trauma-informed approach through the National Trauma Training Programme; and
- Discuss how a trauma-informed approach could support their area of work, as well as staff wellbeing, and identify tangible actions that can help embed a trauma-informed approach in their area of work.

This learning event brought together over 100 attendees, encompassing a wide range of professionals working to improve outcomes for people requiring support from adult social care services in their local authority area who wish to learn more about trauma-informed practice, systems and services. The adult social care sector sits across public, third and private sectors and provides a broad range of support, including care homes, care at home, personal assistants, and unpaid carers. Participants included frontline workers, service managers, policy leads, senior leaders and Elected Members.

The event was chaired by Jess Alexander, Learning & Development Manager, Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). We were delighted to be joined on the day by a number of keynote speakers who highlighted the importance of adopting a trauma-informed approach to working

with people requiring support from adult social care services at a local and national level. These included:

- Jessica Milburn, Home Manager, Tranent Care Home, East Lothian
- Dr Claire Fyvie, Psychology Advisor, Scottish Government
- Dr Lisa Ronald, Principal Educator, NHS Education for Scotland
- Dr Amy Homes, Clinical Psychologist, Adult Mental Health

[**View the full video playlist**](#)

[**Link to Speaker Slides**](#)



Key Messages

While the remainder of this learning report outlines the key barriers and enablers and future action and support highlighted by participants during discussions, there were a number of key messages identified throughout the event:

- Training is a key part of developing a trauma-informed approach in systems and services, but other actions are also vital for long-term culture change, including trauma-informed leadership, meaningful engagement with people with lived experience in service design, robust evaluation of what is and is not working, and supporting staff wellbeing;
- The importance of responding to trauma and developing trauma-informed systems, services and workforces requires recognition and buy-in from senior leaders and decision makers, and leaders both locally and nationally must drive forward this agenda at a strategic level;
- No individual staff member, service or organisation is solely responsible for responding to trauma. A joined-up, multi-agency approach must be taken to ensure trauma-informed practice and policy is sustainably developed and embedded collaboratively across systems and services, shaped by the lived experience of people in Scotland who have been affected by trauma; and
- While there are numerous examples of good practice across Scotland, there is a need for tools and resources to support local areas and organisations to develop consistency and accountability.

Barriers and Enablers for adopting a trauma-informed approach to adult social care – key themes identified by participants



BARRIERS

Lack of time and resources for staff to recognise how practice can be adapted.

Physical constraints on meetings due to social distancing and COVID-19 limitations. This can make it harder to develop and share ideas.

Some staff feel that the workload and expectations placed on staff are not compatible with trauma-informed service design.



ENABLERS

Buy in from senior management and sector leaders.

Having champions across services and teams in order to fully support culture change.

Accessing support and resources to strengthen skills, knowledge and understanding, including training and the trauma-informed practice toolkit.

How trauma informed is your organisation's policy and practice?

Participants were asked to reflect on existing work and awareness of a trauma-informed approach within their service, organisation or local area. The following key themes, actions and areas for support were identified across discussions:

- Many attendees felt that their organisation or service was in the early stages of embedding a trauma-informed approach, but acknowledged that there is increasing awareness of this approach and some of the national resources available.
- Participants highlighted good practice within their own workplaces, such as increased 1:1 check-ins between managers and staff, peer support with a focus on wellbeing, and dedicated time and space at work for socialising.
- Some organisations have implemented a trauma-informed approach across policies and procedures, such as having a wellbeing strategy, developing staff networks to support wellbeing, appointing wellbeing champions, and raising awareness of support available to staff such as employee assistance programmes.
- Many of the participants noted that their organisation had access to training on issues such as trauma, mental health, bereavement, suicide and other topics, which they felt contributed to greater awareness of trauma-informed practice.
- It was noted that there is generally a lack of consistency in awareness and implementation of trauma-informed practice across services, local areas and sectors, and that a joined-up approach would be far more effective.

How might trauma-informed practice support staff wellbeing and the people supported by your service/organisation?

Participants were asked to consider how trauma-informed practice could support staff wellbeing in the adult social care sector as well as the people supported by those services. The following key points were identified:

Coping with the impact of COVID-19

Participants felt that trauma-informed practice would address some of the impacts the pandemic has had on staff in adult social care. Staff have reported feeling isolated, burned out and more stressed over the last year, and many have dealt with acute bereavement in and out with work. Participants identified that trauma-informed practice would strengthen and promote staff wellbeing and resilience, particularly important given the impact of the pandemic on the workforce. It was also highlighted that building skills in trauma-informed practice in staff would better equip them to support the wellbeing needs of people accessing adult social care services.

Increased awareness of support

Staff wellbeing is a key driver to developing a trauma-informed organisation. Participants highlighted that through raising awareness of trauma-informed approaches, this would also help strengthen awareness of wider support available to staff to support their wellbeing. This approach would also help provide awareness for managers on what could affect staff and help identify what good practice is needed to provide necessary support. It was noted that staff awareness of the support available to them is vital in enabling them to continue their delivery of care to others. Reducing stigma around asking for help was identified as a key barrier to overcome, and it was felt that trauma-informed practice would support this by letting staff know that they can speak up when they need support.

Supportive and safe environments and relationships

Participants thought that a trauma-informed approach would support managers to incorporate trauma-informed practice into individual supervision sessions and within wider team support structures. Participants emphasised the need for time and space at work to reflect on wellbeing and create environments where staff are able to support one another. Physical spaces to connect were identified as more important than ever given the increase in remote working and isolation during the pandemic.

What action and support are required to ensure your organisation's policy and practice are trauma informed?

Participants were asked to reflect on key next steps and actions going forward that can support the implementation of a trauma-informed approach in their area/organisation. The following points were identified:

1. Increase the awareness and use of resources which support trauma-informed practice

Participants highlighted that all staff would find it useful to access and use the resources available from the National Trauma Training Programme. It was noted that capacity constraints can sometimes limit engagement with training and development, but that it is vital that staff are able to make use of these resources and regularly reflect on their practice.

ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FOR INDIVIDUALS/ORGANISATIONS

Implement key resources into staff training plans and organisations' learning and development strategies.

Use the new Trauma-informed Practice Toolkit to review practice and scope what change is needed within organisations and services.

Embed the language of trauma-informed practice into organisation strategies, communications, and policies.

SUPPORT REQUIRED

Sustainable funding and resource dedicated to training the workforce and supporting wider transformational change.

At a national level, oversight and support is needed to drive forward this work, to build capacity within and across organisations and to implement improvements.

Networking opportunities to share good practice and provide advice on implementation.

2. Buy-in for trauma-informed approaches from leaders locally and nationally

It was highlighted that this approach needs to be supported by those in leadership and decision-making positions. Participants felt that leadership buy-in was essential, and that leaders must have the appropriate knowledge and skills to raise awareness of trauma-informed practice among all staff and build confidence in the culture change needed.

ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FOR INDIVIDUALS/ORGANISATIONS

Leaders could seek to strengthen their understanding and awareness of their role in driving forward a trauma-informed approach in their service/ organisation by seeking training and development opportunities.

Staff within organisations can inform their leadership of the resources available to them and request that this be made a priority.

Organisations can develop a champion role to disseminate information and lead on building trauma-informed practice.

SUPPORT REQUIRED

National guidance and support for leaders on their role in developing a trauma-informed approach within their own organisation/ service.

Collective action and voice from leaders in the adult social care sector, which supports a culture shift towards being trauma informed.

What action are you taking forward after attending today's event?



Disseminate information to staff and encourage use of resources.



Develop a trauma champion role within organisation.



Ensure that staff receive the support they need to take care of themselves and others.



Link with multi-agency partners and plan for future collaborative working.



Embed trauma-informed policy and practice into learning and development strategy.



Promote positive culture change, internally and externally.

Summary

Looking ahead, stakeholders identified the need for:

- A focus on staff wellbeing in the transition to recovery and renewal from COVID-19, recognising the impact of the pandemic on staff in the adult social care sector, increasing their awareness of broader wellbeing support available for the adult social care workforce, and supporting workplaces to create safe environments for staff.
- Support for leaders on their role in developing a trauma-informed approach within their own organisation/service, and to take a collective leadership approach within the wider sector.
- Sustainable funding, resource, and oversight dedicated to workforce training and capacity building to embed trauma-informed practice.

Next Steps

- The findings and recommendations from this learning report will be shared with the National Steering Group for Trauma Training, chaired by the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for COVID recovery, and will be used to inform future delivery and implementation of the National Trauma Training Programme.
- The Improvement Service, in partnership with NHS Education for Scotland and the Scottish Government, have launched an online community of practice, free and available to all professionals across Scotland who are interested in finding out more about trauma-informed policy and practice and who would like to share learning. To join, please visit: <https://khub.net/group/trauma-informed-approaches-in-scotland/group-home>
- The Improvement Service, NHS Education for Scotland and the Scottish Government are supporting the development of a network of trauma champions, who are senior leaders across local authorities, NHS Health Boards and other key community planning partners. The trauma champions will be supported to drive forward trauma-informed practice and policy across their organisations and local areas in a multi-agency, collaborative way. For more information, please visit the [NTTP website](#).
- The [Scottish Social Services Council](#), in its workforce development role, will work with NES, the Improvement Service, the Scottish Government and other national partners to raise awareness of the National Trauma Training Programme and associated resources across adult social care and the wider social services sector, and will support the use of these in services.

Resources

The National Trauma Training Programme (NTTP) and e-learning resources

- The [NTTP website](#) provides information on the training and resources developed by the NTTP to support the skills and knowledge of the whole Scottish workforce. This includes access to e-learning modules, videos about the benefits of trauma-informed practice, and information on the Scottish Trauma-Informed Leaders Training programme (STILT).
- This [interactive PDF](#) summarises the key trauma training resources from the NTTP that are openly available to support all members of the Scottish workforce to strengthen their understanding of their role in responding to people affected by trauma.
- This [Trauma Informed Practice Toolkit for Scotland](#) has been developed in collaboration with experts by experience and provides clear, tangible examples of where trauma informed practice has been successfully embedded across different sectors of the workforce.

Improvement Service briefing and infographic

[Taking a trauma-informed lens to COVID-19 recovery, renewal and transformation](#)

In partnership with COSLA and NHS Education for Scotland, the Improvement Service has published a briefing to highlight how adopting a trauma-informed approach to Scotland's COVID-19 recovery, renewal and transformation agenda can support key priorities, including improving outcomes for vulnerable people and communities affected by trauma and supporting workforce wellbeing and resilience.

[Infographic: A trauma-informed approach to Scotland's COVID-19 recovery, renewal and transformation](#)

In partnership with NHS Education for Scotland, the Improvement Service has published an infographic briefing to highlight the impact of COVID-19 on people affected by trauma, and how a trauma-informed approach can support Scotland's COVID-19 recovery, renewal and transformation agenda.

Staff support and wellbeing

[National Wellbeing Hub](#)

This national digital wellbeing hub, which is aimed specifically at professionals working in the Health and Social Care sector, supports staff, carers, volunteers and their families to access relevant support when they need it, and provides a range of self-care and wellbeing resources designed to aid resilience as the whole workforce responds to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Below is a link to a resource developed by NHS Education for Scotland that provides an overview of support available for staff wellbeing.



Join our new community of practice on the Knowledge Hub

This Knowledge Hub group is for professionals across Scotland who are working to adopt a trauma-informed approach across policy and practice. It is a safe space for professionals to connect to each other and share good practice, learning and resources. National partners NHS Education for Scotland, the Improvement Service and Scottish Government will also share useful information and resources. It is free and easy to join the Knowledge Hub.

To join, please visit: <https://khub.net/group/trauma-informed-approaches-in-scotland/group-home>

Stay up to date

Follow the Improvement Service and partners on Twitter to stay up to date with future events and new resources:

[@Improvserv](https://twitter.com/Improvserv)

[@NES_Psychology](https://twitter.com/NES_Psychology)

[@IS_VAWandTrauma](https://twitter.com/IS_VAWandTrauma)

